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ABSTRACT

The need for workplace skills upgrading has never been more acute. In Canada, many awareness-building initiatives for literacy have been started. The most successful efforts will probably be those based on a partnership model that links companies and unions with educators who understand adult learning styles. Before a workplace literacy program can be established, however, a number of barriers must be overcome. These barriers include perceptions of employers and educators, the issue of control, access to the most useful resource persons, and time and cost. As part of the process of setting up a workplace literacy program, those involved must assess possible educational resources and draw up a formal or informal partnership agreement. Setting up a workplace literacy partnership could involve these steps: (1) conducting an organizational needs assessment; (2) conducting a literacy task analysis; (3) individual assessment; (4) designing the program; (5) developing the curriculum; (6) implementing the program; and (7) assessing the success of the program through its effects on workers. Business/union/education partnerships may hold the key to providing the educated work force needed in the 1990s and beyond. (KC)

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Glenda Lewe

# THE NEED FOR WORKPLACE LITERACY PARTNERSHIPS

The need for workplace skills upgrading has never been more acute. A combination of forces are at work, making the workplace more complex just at the time when the "futurists of the past" had predicted that the workplace would be a simpler place to work. It is cleaner perhaps, more environmentally friendly, but simpler, no. The worker who has "all brawn" to offer with few mental skills to go with it is finding fewer niches today, as even basic warehouse and packaging operations now add computerized process control to the tasks of workers.

The old style vertical management which placed workers in narrow job categories, repeating the same functions time over time over time during the course of a day, has ceded to a more horizontal approach in which workers, instead of learning more and more about less and less, assume broader functions, allowing them to contribute to several functions of the production process. This approach provides workers with greater opportunities, but at the same time imposes a heavier demand for skills.

Some businesses are beginning to respond with skills upgrading provided in the workplace, while other businesses continue to hope that the school system and various adult education alternatives will solve basic skills problems among the work force. What these businesses may not realize is that workplace literacy IS one of those adult education alternatives, and that educators and other professionals can be a partner with business in advising on workplace literacy approaches or actually participating in the establishment of programs.

Over the past several years a great many awareness building initiatives for literacy have taken place across the country. Sponsored by the National Literacy Secretariat or provincial governments, public policy fora and other business/labour meetings or seminars have taken place to examine the dimensions of the literacy challenge and to determine approaches to solutions. The Business Task Force on Literacy's release of the Woods Gordon report on the cost of illiteracy in Canada, (February, 1988) was a beginning in the sensitization process. The figure of 8.8 billion dollars in lost income, through unachieved production and industrial accidents caused by illiteracy in the workplace sent ripples if not shockwaves among business and helped to put literacy on the business agenda. In addition, the de Grandpre Report and surveys conducted by the Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre assisted in making literacy a legitimate business and labour concern rather than a blip on the corporate calendar.

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A major difficulty exists, however, which is preventing workplace literacy programs from being established. Many companies (and trade unions, which are often active in training) do not know how to get started. Some, who see technical training as the answer to every problem, may even have difficulty in coming to the realization that literacy is indeed a matter of concern. Often, however, technical training cannot be fully realized when trainees and workers on the job have not mastered the basic skills required to fully comprehend training materials and other documents they will encounter.

With the word "literacy" carrrying the "baggage" and stigma that it does, some companies may even conclude that mounting literacy efforts could be demeaning to their workers. These companies would probably feel most comfortable with a program which integrates literacy into other training endeavours rather than a "stand alone" program which groups together persons needing literacy upgrading and offers a separate literacy class.

There is room in the Canadian workplace for all kinds of literacy initiatives - but those which are most successful will probably be based on a partnership model which links companies and unions with service providers with particular knowledge of adult learning styles.

Deciding to enter into such a partnership will probably be the most critical decision that the company/union will have to take, since making a commitment to action is the true giant step forward. Establishing a partnership for literacy requires trust between or among the partners. This trust will not be automatic since often adult educators and workplace managers and trainers do not come into close contact with one another. However, there are many ways in which an education service provider can contribute to stronger basic skills for the workforce. Before this contribution can take place, however, a number of barriers must be overcome.

BARRIER NUMBER 1 - PERCEPTIONS

The company/union may view the educator as out of touch with the workplace. They may take the view that the schools have already had a chance to provide basic skills and have failed. The educator may view the workplace as a strange place, far from the familiar comfort of the classroom. There may be a reluctance to face the noise and dust of some workplaces as well.

OVERCOMING BARRIER NUMBER 1

There is a need for accomodation on both sides. The company can

balance the perceived weakness of the educator against what they have always known to be the educator's strength - the ability to apply learning strategies to a number of diverse situations. The educator, on his or her part, can realize that there is more to education than structured teaching. The educator can keep in mind that his/her contribution in the workplace goes beyond "teaching" in the traditional sense and can include a wide range of activities such as text simplification, devising problem solving exercises, facilitating critical thinking and building techniques for better comprehension. The adult educator must come to terms as well with the fact that he/she is not there to teach but rather to stimulate and facilitate.

BARRIER NUMBER 2 - THE ISSUE OF CONTROL

Every partnership involves a balance of each partner's interests. A true partnership involves each partner feeling comfortable about his role. When a partnership is new, however, there is often friction on the question of "Who's in charge?" The company, as the initiator and approver of the literacy initiative, wants to keep control; the adult educator/service provider is also anxious to maintain a sense of ownership over some elements of the program. The union will also be active in defending the interests of worker members. If the control issue is not recognized and resolved at the beginning the partnership will not run smoothly.

OVERCOMING BARRIER NUMBER 2

The "control" issue can be resolved at the outset through a "protocol document" or memorandum of agreement signed by both parties at the beginning of the partnership. The company and or union and the service provider will need to discuss "who does what" and "who decides what" before the program even starts. Answers to these questions will differ depending on the type of partnership chosen.

If a "stand alone" literacy program has been chosen - in which the literacy provider gathers together those in need of basic skills upgrading into a special "class", then the provider will want and should have a reasonable amount of control over what happens during that class time, The company, of course, will control decisions on the frequency of class time and the conditions under which the class is offered -i.e. -fully contributed hours or half contributed hours.

If, however, an integrated aproach is chosen - in which the literacy elements are being added to technical elements within the framework of existing technical training, the adult educator

will have a much different role. In this case, the adult educator will offer guidance and assistance to the trades or corporate trainer but will not be the actual deliverer of training. The trades/corporate trainer will continue to be the deliverer but, unlike in the past, he will now add a great many adult education strategies to his instruction - thus improving the trainees' abilities to deal effectively with learning in the workplace. Accomodation between these two experts is, of course, required. The adult educator must realize that the class is being conducted by the other instructor, who must in turn realize that his new role is not only to assimilate the various techniques brought by the adult educator but also implement these techniques when providing instruction to trainees.

BARRIER NUMBER 3 - ACCESS

Since the partnership idea may very well be new, a major need will be for the company/union to access a skilled adult educator/literacy practitioner - or conversely - for the adult educator to access a workplace. For the company to simply phone a school board, community college or other service provider and expect to find the right resource immmediately may not be practical. There are a number of reasons why this may not be immediately possible. Perhaps the time of possible providers is already fully allocated. Perhaps possible available providers are not interested in working in a workplace setting or are not adaptable enough or confident enough to do so. Perhaps they are not willing to work at night if needed or at "odd" hours.

In the event that service providers are available, the company/union will need to evaluate carefully the adaptability of these providers and choose one who will be able to flow easily into the new experience. Looking at the situation from the service provider's perspective, one could also point to the need for the educator to choose wisely when accessing a workplace. The educator will need to know that there will be a high degree of openness and co-operation from the company and the union, and a desire to enter a full partnership in which each partner contributes his or her strengths. If this is lacking the partnership will probably not flourish.

OVERCOMING BARRIER NUMBER 3

As workplace literacy becomes better known as a viable solution for basic skills deficiencies, more and more "literacy institutes" and other training initiatives to acclimatize adult educators to the workplace are taking place. This means that an ever increasing pool of trained educators will be available who have been sensitized to the realities of diverse workplaces. More important will be the "domino effect" as trained workplace service providers train others - who then train others - in the new information and skills they have learned.

Just as the Institutes are having an effect on practitioners, so the "public policy fora" are having an effect on the business/labour community. The National Literacy Secretariat and provincial governments have sponsored such fora to bring together all the various and potential partners in major cities across Canada. Such opportunities have permitted educators and business leaders who normally would not meet each other to explore avenues of possible collaboration.

BARRIER NUMBER 4 - TIME AND COST

A literacy partnership does not come without costs. It will involve the allocation of training dollars by the company for basic skills training. It will also involve the time of employees at various levels in the company - from the CEO who must show commitment, to the human resource manager who must exhibit leadership and co-operation, to thhe division supervisor who must provide detailed input on upgrading concerns within his division.

The union will also be involved. If there is a training trust fund arrangement there will be an identifiable source of training funds, drawing from management and workers. Union stewards will be an important component of making the partnership work through promoting its value for workers. Therefore, union personnel will need to devote time to fully exploring the potential of the partnership and doing whatever is necessary to "sell" the partnership to workers - be it informally or through small meetings. The administrator of the training trust fund (generally a union person) will be key to decision making on the approaches to follow and can be expected to devote time to analysis of various literacy training possibilities.

Some costs will be up front while others are more hidden. The company will need to pay the adult education facility for the costs of program development and implementation. Less obvious but just as important as a cost factor is the freeing up of employees for basic skills training in the event that a separate class is envisaged. Even with the integrated aproach where there is not a separate literacy class there will be cost factors linked to the fact that adding literacy elements will take up more employee and instructor time in the training process.

From the adult education perspective there are also costs in time and money. Administrators of educational facilities will need to devote training dollars to getting staff trained in workplace program delivery and will need to allocate time to networking with the business and labour community.

## OVERCOMING BARRIER NUMBER 4

The barrier of time and cost will not be overcome until businesses begin to perceive literacy as an essential element of training for which they have responsibility rather than a frill which they are magnaminously conferring. Limited funding support from governments has been available to business and labour organizations who wish to establish partnerships for literacy within the workplace, but this funding cannot be expected to go beyond a small catalytic role. Businesses will need to assume costs on their own for this very necessary aspect of employee training. It may be that the creation of "outstanding role model awards" provided by government to companies which set model corporate examples of basic skills training may help to put literacy on the corporate agenda.

## SETTING UP A WORKPLACE LITERACY PARTNERSHIP

Let's assume now that the company or union has decided to forge ahead with a workplace literacy program. There is no one way of doing this, but the model here outlined may be helpful to those setting out along this path. Elsewhere in this book other models appear which offer alternate modes. The important thing to remember is that whatever avenue is selected, it will have to be adapted to the particular circumstances of the workplace.

The following scenario is aimed at the business or union oficial who is seeking a workplace literacy partnership. In effect, it provides a blueprint for action.

Steps in Setting up the Partnership

The business or union will want to begin by setting up its own small work team. If the initiative is originating with the company, the company's CEO or Director of Human Resoueces will wish to find a locus of responsibility for literacy program development. In the first stage, this may be simply two or three individuals, representing management and labour, with increases in representation taking place further along in the process as needed. In order for the initiative to display legitimacy, it will be important that the team members be at a level where decision making is possible.

One of the work team's first responsibilities will be to review exactly who are the persons and resources within the community who could be expected to be a possible partner for literacy. This review will consider service providers such as adult educators from community colleges, teachers from Boards of Education, private literacy consultants and voluntary sector organizations.

The team may wish to contact key providers to see if they are interested in becoming a partner in the proposed initiative. But before meeting with them the team may wish to have a clear idea of what needs to be done. This needs list could conceivably include:
- an organizational needs assessment
- a literacy task analysis
- individual assessments
- program design
- curriculum development
- program implementation.

In assessing the suitability of potential partners, several key questions will surface.

- Does this person have experience with teaching adults?

- Has this person experience in one or more different workplace settings?

- Is this person likely to be adaptable to new situations?

- Does this person have the ability to interact effectively with both labour and management and with individual workers of many backgrounds and education and skill levels?

- Is this person flexible in terms of time and place for program development and implementation?

This latter question recognizes the fact that workplace classes will often take place outside of normal working hours and in a non-traditional location.

Now comes the time to choose the adult educator who will be part of the partnership. It may be at this point that the small work team may be expanded to include several more players, including divisional representation if the company is a large one. The educator will be introduced to the workplace through a workplace tour and the work team or committee will be important in ensuring that it is smooth and non-threatening. The workplace tour will in all liklihood be followed by the new partner conducting interviews with key workplace personnel, including a cross section of workers at various levels within the company.

After the workplace tour and the initial interviews the education partner will be in a position to advise business on the steps he or she is ready to take to bring about basic skills upgrading within the company. This could include everything from organizational needs assessment through literacy task analysis, individual assessments, program design, curriculum development and program implementation or a combination of several of these. If a phased approach is chosen attention may be focussed on one or two aspects only. The business and union should be on guard, however, against an approach which looks at individual assessment in the first instance without the groundwork laid by the organizational needs assessment and/or the literacy task analysis.

Many partnerships will like the comfort of a protocol agreement which outlines exactly what services will be offered and over what approximate length of time. This will prevent misunderstandings of the mandate or varying views of the job at hand from marring the harmony of the partnership.

While the company will probably give the adult educator a carte blanche to operate within the parameters set in the protocol, the company will want to maintain close contact with the chosen program developer/deliverer to ensure that events are progressing satisfactorily. This will probably mean at least a monthly meeting of the full committee, with additional smaller meetings as required.

## The Organizational Needs Assessment

The organizational needs assessment provides a snap-shot of the organization and its culture. It allows the educator partner to get a good feel for what the company is all about. Knowing the hierarchical structure which gives the company its form and the management philosophy which provides its spirit will be invaluable to the education partner in determining approaches to basic skills development. It will also be important to have details of union/management co-operation and information on whatever structures there may be in the workplace to assist workers, such as, for example, Employee Assistance Programs and quality circles.

The organizational needs assessment will also yield information on the percentage of ethnic workers and a general idea of how well they get along in their mother tongue and in their second language. The ONA will also examine general education levels, by division where possible. It will probably be unnecessary for the educator to have a really detailed statistical look at these matters, since the purpose of the Organizatiuonal Needs Assessment is to set the scene for future action and not to provide a detailed management profile per se. Personnel people will be able to provide sufficient details on these subjects and on others requested by the educator.

The Organizational Needs Assessment will seek information on organizational or operational changes which have resulted from changing technology or from introducing new production processes. This will be important since it will point toward possible incremental literacy needs within positions which have been impacted by these changes.

It will be important as well for the educator to identify at this stage the degree to which a training structure is already in place within the company and the union. If there are fruitful ways of building the basic skills upgrading initiatives into a training structure which already exists for other purposes, much time and energy will be saved.

After the Organizational Needs Assessment has been completed, the analytical base is in place from which other decisions can be made.

The Literacy Task Analysis

The Organizational Needs Assessment sets the stage for the Literacy Task Analysis. A literacy task analysis is an analysis of the various elements which make up a particular job, with particular emphasis on the literacy skills required to perform that job. Since a narrow definition of literacy (reading, writing, 'rithmetic) may lead to a narrow training focus, it would be advisable at this point to look at the Basic Skills Profile developed by Taylor and Lewe in the document Basic Skills Training - A launchpad for Success in the Workplace. The skills outlined in that document include Basic Listening and Oral Communication Skills, Creative Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills, Personal Management Skills (attitudes and behaviours), and Teamwork Skills as well as the traditional skills which we all think up immediately when we think of literacy - reading, writing and computation. All these skills can be included in the literacy task analysis.

The core skills of reading, writing and computation are the major target for inquiry in the literacy task analysis but the ancillary skills of listening and oral communication, creative thinking and problem solving, personal management and teamwork become important in the analysis since it is these skills, when wedded to the basic literacy skills, that create an effective and fully functioning employee.

The literacy task analysis will yield details of the main elements of the job. Even though the analyst may be examining one job alone, it will be important to keep in mind that this job does not exist in isolation from others. The analyst will want to find out where this job fits in the organization, since that information is crucial if the literacy task analysis is being used to identify the incremental or different skills required either for promotability or transferability within the company. Even if the analysis is being used to identify training needs for present incumbents, with no thought to transferability and promotability, it is wise to keep in mind that the job exists within a context and that the whole context is relevant.

Businesses, unions aand practitioners - all those involved in the analysis - need to understand clearly that a literacy task analysis is not a time and motion study, since only general ideas of time is necessary. Nor is it an efficiency study that makes recommendations on how to improve the job. The literacy task analysis shoud be - and must be - non-judgmental.

Because the job is the focus of the investigation rather than the individual, a highly competent performer will be the subject for the observation and interviews connected to the analysis. The information obtained will provide sufficient information to guide the design of a training program for incumbents of or aspirants to that position,

There are numerous techniques used to conduct a literacy task analysis, ranging from observations linked with targetted interviews to more complex techniques which chart skills and duties via a matrix, or plot competencies and duties on a "learning grid". The more simple of the techniques can be carried out with little training while the more complex will require a fully versed practitioner. No matter which techniques are chosen, the key to success is remembering that the information gleaned is all relevant for program design and curriculum development when building a training program.

The Individual Assessment

The Literacy Task Analysis provides the kind of information which is required if training is to address specific job needs rather than being hit and miss. Once full information is available on the technical, literacy and ancillary skills required to do a job it will be possible to consider what tools could be used to conduct an individual assessment.

There are many assessment instruments commonly used to assess individuals' literacy levels. CAAT, (Canadian Adult Achievement Test0. WRAT (Wide Ranging Aptitude Test) and Gates-McGinity are examples. Frequently, however, these and like tests are grade related and do not relate to workplace realities. Many practitioners are finding that informal assessments based on actual workplace documents are more useful in assessing workers' needs. The lack of norms and validation need not cause a problem since assessments can be designed to fit the very specific needs of various workplaces.

Understanding the link between the literacy task analysis and the individual assessment is key to setting up a successful program. As pointed out earlier, the literacy task analysis is looking at the literacy requirements needed to do a job - it focuses on the job in the first instance rather than the individual. The individual assessment, on the other hand, focuses on the literacy attainments and capacities of workers. Both are vital parts in developing a training program. The individual assessments will show the trainers "where the workers are at" in regard to factors such as reading, writing, computation and problem solving - and the literacy task analysis will show "where the workers need to

be" to do their jobs effectively or to move on to other jobs. If, for instance, the literacy task analysis shows a need for using decimals and fractions and the individual assessments show weaknesses in these areas, then these areas become subjects for training for persons in this job category.

The "individual assessment phase" calls for a high degree of trust between the company and the education partner. There are different ways of carrying out this phase, some calling for results of assessments to be recorded within company files and reviewed by company personnel. However, the partnership approach does provide the opportunity to carry out this phase effectively, in a non-threatening way with complete confidentiality of test results between the education partner and the worker. This route has much to commend it since it will remove any perception that workers may be discriminated against or penalized if "problem" scores surface in management offices. If assessment results are used exclusively by the education partner to design training courses and to identify curriculum needs, and if this is understood at the outset, then many difficulties can be averted. Workers will be much more ready to be tested if they know that results are confidential.

Program Design

Program design will vary depending on whether the program is to be a "stand alone" literacy program or a job specific program with literacy elements integrated into the content. If the "integrative" approach is chosen, this is the juncture at which the partnership between the adult educator and the company or union trades trainer becomes critical. Many workplaces do not have a training structure as such so the integrative approach is not suited to every situation.

Here are some characteristics of the two approaches. In the "stand alone" program, literacy is the main focus. There may be some general workplace content but the main goal of instruction is literacy. The instructor, under this design model, will need general orientation to the workplace but does not have to be an expert in the workers' job content. In the integrated program, on the other hand, the technical aspects of the job are the main focus. Specific workplace content will be highlighted, with literacy elements built in subtly by way of example and explanation. The instructor will need assistance from the adult educator, but does not need to be an adult ediucator. Rather, it is important that he or she be a subject matter expert in the job itself.

Whether the stand alone or integrative approach is followed, the program design will identify units for a course outline and the theme areas to be addressed. It will concentrate (according to the model) on such matters as workplace terminology, how to follow directions, problem solving, use of workplace materials, locating information from many sources and reading for a purpose.

It is at this design stage that the basic skills profile - and how it has been used in the literacy task analysis - becomes instrumental in furthering the global goal of basic skills improvement for workers. If the task analysis has clearly shown that a particular ancillary skill is very important in a particular job ( such as teamwork, one element of personal management), then the program design may concentrate on exercises where a team effort is part of the course approach. In all instances, the literacy task analysis and the individual assessment results will be the chart guiding the trainer to the appropriate training goals and terminal performance objectives.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum development is the next step, and it is here that the educator partner needs to ensure that the business/union partner is fully aware of the possibilities which have emerged from the design. Depending on the particular workplace, curriculum development could take various directions. Curriculum development, with all it involves in terms of detailed lesson plans and the preparation of materials for classes and for background, is extremely time consuming, and it is at this stage that priorities will need to be set as to what will come first. While the educator can advise in this regard, it will probably be the company (the paying partner) who will decide on what part of the curriculum should be developed first. That decision will depend on a number of variables, ranging from choosing areas where new processes are being introduced to deciding on the basis of job complexity.

Since curriculum and materials development is an expert area in its own right, it may be that the education partner will want to bring in a colleague to help in this particular facet. While the company may wish the same educator to carry through from beginning to end, that may not be possibl;e, given areas of specialty within the education community. If the educator developing the curriculum materials is not the same person as the one who conducted the task analysis and/or the individual assessments this should not present a problem if the process has been well documented throughout and accompanied by a detailed briefing.

Program Implementation

Program implementation will mean different things, depending on what type of program has been chosen. If a materials development program has been chosen it will simply mean that the new materials will be available for all work situations. If a classroom program is to be used, then implementation will be preceded by a number of decisions regarding who will be in the class, who will be instructing or facilitating the class, where the class will be held and whether it will be "wholly, partly or not at all" on company time.

If the integrated approach is used in which the adult educator is teaming up with an instructor who is already offering technical training programs, then implementation will involve using the talents of the adult educator in the way which best fits the situation. It may be that the educator will be a team teacher on-site with the trades/technical trainer, or it may be that the adult educator wil perform a more background role, concentrating on passing along to the technical person the various literacy strategies which he can then pass along to the trainees. The comprehensiveness of this partnership will depend on the individuals involved and what feels most comfortable for them.

Since a smooth operation of the partnership is so critical to the success of a literacy program, it is important that each partner be aware of exactly what his or her role is. This will need to be agreed upon by the full committee overseeing the project and written right into the agreement if a formal agreement is utilized.

In the event that a "stand alone" literacy program is chosen in which the adult educator is not teamed up so closely with a technical trainer, the adult educator will have more control. However, given the complexities of workplaces and how quickly circumstances may change in reaction to the competitive environment and technological advances, the adult educator must be ready to exhibit flexibility in approach.

The Implementation Stage, of course, implies evaluation as a post-implementation requirement. The evaluation should be approached very carefully. Since literacy improvement can be much more gradual for some individuals than for others, it can be threatening to workers if they are formally tested after the program to assess how much they have progressed. The adult educator/technical trainer may perceive improvements and will surely reinforce them by giving positive feedback to the individuals. However, since most workplace literacy upgrading programs do not result in a diploma or a certificate there is no need to do formal post-assessment. Workers who do experience

considerable growth through the program and the consequent rise in motivation will exhibit that new dimension in numerous ways - through their enrollment in adult education classes, their participation in workplace bodies and committees, and their capacity to gain promotions or obtain lateral transfers to positions where new skills are required. In the final analysis it is by these indices that the success of a workplace literacy program can be assessed.

## Reaffirming the Need for Workplace Literacy Partnerships

A recent U.S. survey of 645 American corporations has shown that most companies surveyed are having trouble finding qualified workers. An Ottawa Citizen article on the survey on July 22, 1990 reported:
"Recognizing problems of a changing labor force has largely not been followed by implementing solutions, the survey showed. For example, the most common reason for rejecting job applicants is inadequate writing and verbal skills. But employee training is not "a priority at many companies, at least measured by monetary outlays.", the report said."

The Citizen article also reported this key finding of the survey: "Most of the companies (78 per cent) are addressing the skills gap in a traditional manner - tuition reimbursement. However, relatively little is being spent on training. Only five per cent spend more than $5,000 in classroom and on-the-job training for new employees in their first year." There is no reason to believe that the Canadian situation differs substantially from the American.

It is hard to criticize companies for seeking only a "traditional solution" to employee upgrading - tuition reimbursement - if no effort has been made by educators, companies and unions to point the way to more innovative and targetted solutions for specific workplaces. Many workers who may have had an unsatisfactory experience within a school system are not going to seek the formality of an educational institution to upgrade their skills. Even if they do choose such a route, they may find that it is so unrelated to the work situation that they are unable to establish relevance. Studies by Thomas Sticht and others have shown that learning accelerates when it is in the context of everyday life experience, and for workers that context is found within the job.

All of which is to state the obvious - that in terms of moving ahead with partnerships, the time has come!

The time has come the worker said
To think and think indeed
Of nails and boards and "how to fax"
Of hard hats and of seed
And if the world is all I've got
And whether I should read.

When taken in this context, one can readily understand the need for workers - be they at a manufacturing or construction site, in an office or on a farm - to maximize their skills for their own personal development and for the smoother functioning of the workplace they have chosen.

If business/union/education partnerships can facilitate this employee self-actualization and this move to greater self confidence through literacy upgrading in the workplace, fulfilling at the same time the needs of all partners, such partnerships will be seen as very much part of the solution for the 1990s and beyond.

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October, 1990